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STATE ADOPTS REVISED MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR WAQUOIT BAY NATIONAL ESTUARINE RESEARCH RESERVE IN MASHPEE

The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) announced today that the DCR Stewardship Council has adopted the recently revised Waquoit Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (WBNERR) Management Plan. The Plan was submitted to the Council and unanimously approved at its July 27 meeting.

"I'm pleased that the Stewardship Council has adopted the WBNERR Management Plan," said DCR Commissioner Stephen H. Burrington. "The Reserve provides invaluable research, educational outreach and environmental guidance to the Commonwealth. With this Plan, DCR is in a position to ensure the preservation of the Reserve's delicate ecosystem, and thus ensure the Reserve continue its critical work."

The Management Plan was developed in response to the federal Coastal Zone Management Act requirement to update the Reserve's management plan every five years. DCR was also directed to develop Resource Management Plans, pursuant to M.G.L. Chapter 21, Section 2F, for all its parks, forests and reservations, and the revised plan satisfies that requirement for WBNERR, too.

The Plan addresses management needs for a 2,800-acre area of marine, aquatic and terrestrial habitat including the Headquarters Area on Route 28, Washburn Island, South Cape Beach Area, the Quashnet River Area and other satellite properties within the bay's watershed. The Plan also outlines a strategy for the Reserve's unique research and education programs.

WBNERR, one of 27 sites in the National Estuarine Research Reserve System and managed by DCR's Division of State Parks and Recreation, is located on the south shore of Cape Cod in Mashpee and Falmouth, and is a partnership between DCR and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Its mission is to improve the stewardship of the region's estuarine and coastal watershed ecosystems: the goals identified for the Reserve are to improve the understanding of coastal ecosystems and the human influences on them; improve environmental literacy in our communities to enable environmentally sustainable decision-making; demonstrate sustainable stewardship of the land and water ecosystems within the Reserve to serve as a model for community stewardship in the region; foster dialog and development of coastal ecosystem management solutions through sustained community engagement; and, improve the operations, infrastructure and stature of the Reserve. These

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goals are addressed through integrated programs in natural resource stewardship, environmental monitoring, scientific research, education, and recreation management.

The planning process included several public meetings, as well as individual meetings with representatives from the scientific, education and coastal management communities. A full draft of the management plan was circulated in the summer of 2005 to key partners within state and Federal government. Once recommendations generated by this preliminary review were incorporated, a 30-day public comment period was initiated by publishing a notice in the MEPA Environmental Monitor and a public meeting was convened. The final approved management plan will be posted on the DCR Resource Management Planning Program website, at <http://www.mass.gov/dcr/stewardship/rmp/rmp-wbnerr.htm>.

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